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**Title:**

Attorney-General replies to Queensland's Minister of Justice

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## ATTORNEY - GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT

### ATTORNEY-GENERAL REPLIES TO QUEENSLAND'S MINISTER OF JUSTICE

The Australian Legal Aid Office was established so that legal aid would be readily and equally available to all Australians, the Attorney-General, Senator Lionel Murphy, Q.C. said today.

It was not intended that the Office should duplicate legal services but to work in co-operation with the existing services.

Senator Murphy said the reported comments by the Attorney-General and Minister of Justice at Ipswich in Queensland overlooked completely what the Australian Government had done for legal aid throughout Australia.

'Mr. Knox did not mention that I was able to secure \$2 million in emergency grants for the States to supplement their legal aid finances during the last financial year.

'From this grant, \$300,000 was given to the Queensland Government to provide additional legal aid through the Queensland Legal Aid Committee.

'This grant was the first that any Australian Government had made for legal aid purposes,' he said

Senator Murphy said the Government had established the Australian Legal Aid Office because many ordinary people throughout Australia, did not have access to the law and legal process.

'To be denied such access is to be denied justice', Senator Murphy said. 'The Australian Legal Office is a major step in the provision of legal aid services to persons in need, particularly disadvantaged persons, those receiving social services, ex-servicemen, students, migrants and aborigines.'

The Attorney-General said that since the regional office had opened in Ipswich on April 26 this year, the two lawyers in the Office had been heavily committed in providing legal assistance.

The regional office at Ipswich had also introduced the first duty lawyer scheme at Courts of Petty Sessions in Queensland.

The duty lawyer attends the Court daily to advise persons in custody and to deal with matters of bail, pleas of guilty and adjournments.

The Attorney-General said he realised there would be some overlapping problems with existing legal aid bodies following the establishment of the Australian Legal Aid Office.

To devise the most effective means of providing legal aid without unnecessary duplication he had appointed a Legal Aid Review Committee to submit recommendations on -

- the areas of need for the provision of legal assistance and advice and, in particular, the areas of need not covered by existing schemes;
- the means by which legal assistance and advice should be provided and in what areas should they be provided by a salaried legal service; and
- the means by which finance for schemes of legal assistance and advice should be provided.

This Committee under the chairmanship of Mr. Roy F. Turner of New South Wales, included representatives of the private legal profession. In its first report it had made a detailed examination of all existing legal aid schemes in Australia. The Attorney-General said he expected to receive a further report soon.

Senator Murphy said it was unfortunate that, in his reported remarks, Mr. Knox had given no recognition to the achievements of the Australian Government in the area of legal aid and the assistance it had given to the State of Queensland.

Canberra

July 2, 1974

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